

## Homily 3rd Sunday of Easter 2024

'With these thoughts comfort one another' (St Paul)

I went to an amazing funeral last week and although many in the congregation were not Christian there was a clear and uncompromising belief that death was not the end and that 'we WILL meet again some sunny day,' The result was a JOY-FILLED Requiem Mass full of colour and full of hope, knowing that there would one day be a bodily reunion. When I was a child and my Dad's brother, his Mother and Father (my grandmother and grandfather) died I wondered what would become of them and thought they might be some kind of spirits who would wander the earth for all eternity? I had no idea of their bodily resurrection but as I grew older and went to seminary my understanding of life after death matured and I soon realised that Sacred Scripture described a physical, a bodily resurrection not only of Jesus but of all of us.

Over the last three Sundays Sacred Scripture has described The Resurrection Narratives and The Evangelists have taken great pains to emphasise that Jesus was not a ghost, but his was a bodily resurrection. St Matthew describes how Mary Magdalen is told by the angel guarding the tomb that The Risen Christ would meet them in Galilee. As she, and the other women, ran to tell the apostles Jesus meets them and they physically '**embrace his feet.**' St Mark refers to St Luke's fuller story of The Disciples of Emmaus when Jesus, after a long journey on foot, physically **sits with them at table and eats with them**, St John has Jesus appearing bodily to the disciples, on the evening of the day of The Resurrection, showing them his wounds and then has Thomas a week later **physically touch the wounds in his hands and put his hand into the wound in his side**. Today, St Luke in The Gospel again describes a bodily, a physical appearance of Jesus by The Sea of Galilee and emphasises this by describing how Jesus' invites the terrified disciples to again **touch his wounds** and then he physically **eats grilled fish** from a charcoal fire.

Our bodily resurrection is assured because, as it states in our First and Second Readings and indeed in The Gospel, that Jesus takes away not only 'our sins but the sins of all the world.' (1John 2:1-5) (Acts 3:17-19) (NB Not just Catholics' or Christians' sins but he takes away everyone's sins). St Paul reminds us that we too will share Jesus' bodily resurrection: 'But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1Corinthians 15:20)

In the book and true story 'Heaven is for Real' a young boy goes to heaven whilst undergoing an appendectomy and relates, 'No-one is old in heaven, no-one wears glasses in heaven.' This simply endorses the fundamental Christian belief in a bodily resurrection for all. Each Sunday we state our belief that we too will be raised bodily and will one day meet again in joyful reunion, 'I believe in the resurrection from the dead and the life of the world to come' (The Creed). We might casually gloss over it at Sunday Mass but today we should perhaps sit for a while and just thank God for his promise of an eternal bodily life for all. With such hope we should indeed 'comfort one another.'